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MADAM CHAIR/MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE.

MY NAME IS TIMOTHY GELLING, I AM A FATHER OF TWO CHILDREN,
VICTORIA AGE 15 AND TIMOTHY LIAM AGE 12.

I AM HERE TODAY IN SUPPORT OF BILL 1155, BILL 6688 AND BILL 6685 ON
SHARED CUSTODY.

THE BILLS YOU ARE HEARING ABOUT TODAY ARE INDICATIVE THAT THE
FAMILY LAW / DIVORCE SYSTEM IN THE STATE OF CT IS DRAMATICALLY
BROKEN AND NEEDS REFORMS IMMEDIATELY. IN ALL THREE OF THESE
BILLS WE AIM TO REDUCE CONFLICT, LITIGATION, AND ANIMOSITY
BETWEEN PARENTS SO THAT THE LIVES OF THE CHILDREN WILL NOT BE
IRREPARABLY HARMED AS THEY HAVE BEEN UNDER THE SYSTEM TODAY.

My case started in July of 2005, where I first heard what felt like threats of full
custody, psychological evaluations, Guardian Ad Litem's and Attorneys for the
Minor Children. All foreign to me the attorney's wielded terms I never imagined
would be a part of my life. Now, eight years and two hundred and thirty five entries
in my case detail later I am all too familiar. My dissolution took six days of trial and
a total of 20 months. I was married for nine years, ordered to pay alimony for
seven. I was granted generous parenting time.

I have met more judge's lawyers, court officers, police officers, family services workers, therapist, forensic psychologist, GALs and DCF workers then I can remember. My experience is of a system that allows a parent to disregard court orders, deny and disrupt parenting time, use children as messengers to pick up alimony checks, instruct children to keep secrets and lie. My only recourse is filing motions, paying marshals, waiting weeks or months for dates from a system that does not hold anyone responsible for not showing up or walking out of a court room. A broken system that has you wait for hours to be heard or sometimes runs out of hours in the day to hear you, that shuffles you from court to Family Services to court to the hallway and so on. Countless times I have filed motions for contempt waited for my day in court only to leave with the same agreement I went in with, this cycle repeated over and over. There is no continuity, no one ever looked at my case history to detect the patterns or question why we were back again.

The result of this is that my children have lost out on the love and time they deserve from me, their aunts, uncles, cousins. Eventually, the stress on my children drove them from me. It became easier to turn away from me then to endure the pre- and post- visit trauma. I love my children, my children love me, we sang and told stories and laughed and did all the things you are supposed to do, from eating ice cream to doing homework. One day I went to pick my children up from school and they were not there, again, and I couldn't reach them, again, and the next week the same thing and the next weekend they never showed up. Ultimately, my daughter at age 12 told me she didn't want to see me anymore, she didn't love me.

My 8 year old son looked me in the eye, lips quivering and said he didn't want to see me anymore. They had had enough and God bless them they don't deserve the anguish. They will never get back the time we have lost, the holidays, the birthdays, time spent going to the movies, eating pancakes doing algebra, laughing, loving their dad. I have not seen my children for two and a half years.

Reunification therapy, psych evaluations, supervised visitation, more motions, to love my children? It breaks my heart, I am here today in hope that this will not have to happen to other children.

My case is not unique, I have met many other parents, women and men who have had the same experiences. It is uncanny how similar the stories are, the tactics of false allegations, etc. are the norm in our current system, it is too easy to manipulate. A family court judge said to me "it is a broken system but it is the only one we have", well, that is not acceptable. It is time to stop the abuse of the system and the abuse of our children.

I BELIEVE SHARED PARENTING IS CRITICALLY IMPORTANT TO CHILDREN'S EMOTIONAL, MENTAL, AND PHYSICAL HEALTH. THAT IT IS EVERY CHILD'S RIGHT TO HAVE THE LOVE AND CARE OF BOTH PARENTS. AND THAT BETTER LIVES FOR OUR CHILDREN THROUGH FAMILY COURT REFORM IS POSSIBLE.

I thank you for your time and consideration.